

The Real Plight and Forthcoming Possibilities In Higher Education In India

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Introduction :-

In the Program of Action (POA) of National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986, UGC had taken initiative in establishing an autonomous body for improving the quality of Higher Education. Hence, National Assessment Accreditation Council (NAAC) was established in 1994, for quality enhancement and continuous improvement of our Higher Education. At present in our country we have more than 400 Universities and 20,000 Colleges. This is the second largest system in the world, after the USA. Presently near about 20 million students are acquiring Higher Education in various institutions in our country. It shows that the ratio is only 6 % out of the entire population of the country.

At the time of independence, in 1947 we had only 20 Universities and 500 Colleges but today the picture is totally different one. It means within the span of these six decades, there is a great massive expansion of Higher Education. It gets clear when we see the fact that out of above mention universities around 167 Universities and 6000 Colleges are eligible to get the grants by UGC. The expansion and growth in the number of colleges and universities has not been properly guided by any exact policy as far as its quality is concerned. The relevant age group of 16-23 is for both Egypt and Thailand, 10 % for Turkey, 11% for Brazil and 16 % for Mexico. In the though higher education in India has expanded generally, inadequate access continues to cause concern. This issue, therefore needs critical examination. On the other hand in the developed country is more that 22 %. Our General Enrollment Ratio (GER) is comparatively below that the developed country. It has been targeted to increase the same up to 15% by the Planning Commission in 11th Plan. In order to achieve the said target the new educational centers are approved in the country. The success of our Higher Education depends upon its quality. In fact, there are few things which suppose to be taken into consideration to achieve the said target and improve the quality of the Higher Education.

Quality : A Value Based Education :- Today, NAAC has assessed and accredited around 4000 Colleges and 150 Universities. During the 11th Plan period, UGC plans to make assessment and accreditation mandatory for all Universities and Colleges in the country. The success of our Higher Education depends upon the quality of teaching and best practices in the institution. Quality, it means the provision of good teaching, learning, library, laboratories, play ground and other co-curricular activities. Actually, maintaining the quality is the responsibility of respec-

tive institutions themselves. Here, we may say that the NAAC plays only a catalytic role, NAAC will not enforce any given norms and standards on the institution. For the assessment of a University/Autonomous College/ Affiliated college, etc is eligible to be assessed; the NAAC follows a Four Stage process, which is a combination of self-study and peer review. It includes: On-line submission of a Letter of Intent, preparation and submission of a Self-Study Report (SSR) by the institution, Peer Team visit to the institution and final decision of NAAC (finalizing the grade). If the institutes invite the Peer Team of NAAC for assessment and accreditation then it becomes mandatory for them to reaccredit their institutions after every five years. In fact, here they have two options one is the reaccreditation their grade can be increased or decreased according to their quality.

Generally we find that the most of the colleges do not worry about it and they prepare the task and things only for time being job. Once they acquire the grade they do not bother about the quality and all. I am stating like this because the picture of this process is totally different in rural location of the country. Still the students from rural background seem reluctant to join the college which has got the proper status or grade from the NAAC. Then why is it so? Hence, according to me when this picture gets changed then only we may say that the students are getting quality education.

The institutions have to provide and students should ready to accept the good practices of the system. Institutions should have to provide the education through the best and innovative practices. There should be a need to develop quality culture the institution itself. In the Higher Education, the students have to play an important role. They should realize that they have the right to have quality education. When the students pass out from the institutions there should be certain capacities and caliber within them to face the forthcoming challenges. Here the total development of the students means their all round development in physical, intellectual, social and spiritual point of view.

How we should improve the quality? To improve the quality of Higher Education there should be the entire involvement of the Management, Principal, Faculties, Students, Administrative Staff, alumni and all who are directly or indirectly involved in the stream of the system. Here I would like to put one quotation, quoted by William A. Foster, which suits properly to this view, i.e.

“Quality is never an accident, it is always the result of high intention, sincere efforts, intelligent direction and skillful execution. It represents wide choice of many alternatives.”

The formal education is not an adequate thing for overall development of the students and inculcation the values among them. While giving the value based education we cannot be certain that the students get these values from books because there is nearly and inventory of the thou-

sands of words related to education and moral values. It is not certainly quite that these values can be achieved in four walled class room, but those can be achieved from an individual, group, society and the entire behavior of the institution itself.

Application of Quality Benchmark for Quality Sustenance :-All the educational institutions are not same in their quality, some are excellent ones, some are average and rest of the institutions are poor in their quality. Because of the poor quality of education, our students are facing the obstacle of unemployment. The main reason for this is the slow growth of our economy and quality. In fact, expected growth rate is 10%. Even if we achieve this growth, will it solve our unemployment problem?? The answer is “NO”. Because nobody has paid attention to actual facts that the mismatch between what is available and what is needed? We have to find out the solution for this mismatch. Here we have to apply the concept of Benchmarking which is generally used in industry and cooperative arena.

The benchmark lexically stands for something which can be measured and used as standard that other things can be compared with. And the same thing should apply to improve the quality of Higher Education. It also implies complex of superiority and it always enable us to concentrate on our doing and comparing ourselves with the others. In fact it also focuses on the theory of approaches such as, up to what extent do we need to be good?, Who is trying to give proper justice to the quality in order to be the best?, How do they do it?, How can we adopt the things that they do in their institutions?, How can we cross the threshold of the quality called ‘The Best’? and so on.

Education plays a vital role in the development of any nation. Therefore, there is a premium on both quantity (increased access) and quality (relevance and excellence of academic programmes offered) of higher education. Like in any other domain, the method to improve quality remains the same. Finding and recognizing new needs and satisfying them with products and services of international standards. The NAAC has been set up to help all participating institutions assess their performance vis-à-vis set parameters. A rating agency for academic excellence across India, and the country’s first effort. There are number of benefits of NAAC and its accreditation, such as it helps the institution to know its strengths, weaknesses and opportunities through an informed review process, to identify internal areas of planning and resource allocation, it helps to enhance collegiality on the campus, its outcome provides funding agencies objective data for performance funding, it helps to take initiative for the institutions into innovative and modern methods of pedagogy, it gives institutions a new sense of direction and identity, it provides society with reliable information on quality of education offered, employers have access to information on the quality of education offered to potential recruits and it promotes intra and inter-institutional interactions. And this is the only process through which we may acquire the

concept of benchmarking. In fact the institutions which have gone through the assessment and accreditation of NAAC and are awarded proper status which shows their stand of quality and quality education. We should try our level best to acquire the same by following their protocols which are important to maintain the quality.

Privatization : Arena of Private Institutions and Origination of Foreign Universities:-

The private initiative in education, especially higher education is not altogether new to India. Some of the leading universities namely, the Banaras Hindu University and Aligarh Muslim University came up with the efforts of certain dedicated individuals and financial support of the community at large. Again, a large number of education institutions in the country especially those concerned with general and professional higher education have been established on private and voluntary initiative with or without financial subsidy from the country, it appears almost certain to go in for private funding of education. The recent paradigm shift in Indian economic and political philosophy has led to the demand of private universities so as to meet the challenge of contemplated open economy and the demand for qualitative human resources and high level of R & D. In the coming years we are going to have an impact of foreign universities on Indian Higher Educational arena. In the same fashion there is change in the education policies of Indian Govt as far as the introduction of foreign university and privatization are concerned. In fact, being globalize one should not have any kind of restrictions to acquire the taste of knowledge. It is not a bad thing but we must think about the dark side of implementing the same in our context. If it happens in our context then they will start to apply their 'Golden Maxima' i.e. 'Pay as You Consume'. Those who are able to pay will surely pay but what about millions of other who are not able to do so? If we apply the market principal to provision of education meritorious students from economically not accessible group may be compared themselves with the poor then what about the concept of Quality and Justice? While summing it up, I must state that the quality in Higher Education must not be compromised at any cost. We have a great heritage of education and culture and it should not be eradicated by applying any kind of miragical theories which will destroy the future of millions of the students. The way the NAAC has been working is really a praiseworthy task and only from this kind of assessment and accreditation and following the protocols of the concept of the benchmark the institutions can increase their standard of education and quality in Higher Education. But while doing this entire process one should not ignore the values and its importance in our arena of Higher Education. It enables all the ingredients of the Higher Educational arena to work with proper attitude and morality from which we may expect the education. If it gets succeed then there is no need to introduce any kind of foreign institute or university in our country.

Reference

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